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S E C R E T PRAGUE 001630

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2015

TAGS: PHUM PREF PREL EZ UZ KG

SUBJECT: GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS: CZECHS STILL AGREE TO
RESETTLE 40 UZBEKS, BUT...

REF: A. STATE 131485

1B. PRAGUE 1090

Classified By: Poloff Sarah C. Peck for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. Action request at paragraphs 5 and 7.

12. (S) Summary. The good news is that the Czechs are still committed to resettling 40 Uzbek refugees in the Czech Republic (reftel), and are even willing to accept close family members of the refugees. The bad news is in the fine print: the Czechs will take only 15 of the Uzbeks currently being held in the transit camp in Romania (the remaining 25 "slots" will be filled by close family members still trapped in Uzbekistan). The unclaimed Uzbeks refugees who had planned to resettle in the Czech Republic must now identify an alternative destination country. Czechs also expressed concern that Russian-speaking intelligence agents may be shadowing the Uzbeks. End summary.

13. (SBU) Poloff met on Nov. 15 with Tomas Haisman, Director of the Czech Ministry of Interior Department for Asylum and Migration Policies; and Pavla Fridrichova, of the MOI,s Unit for Policy, International Relations, and Information on Countries of Origin. Haisman explained that the decision to take only 15 Uzbek refugees was based on the following feedback provided by the refugees themselves: the key to the success of resettlement in the Czech Republic is reunification with close family members. The Czechs agreed that reunification is crucial, and even referred to their new plan to reunite Uzbeks with family members as a "pilot project."

Why only 15?

14. (C) The Czechs say they were shocked to learn that the 40 refugees they preliminarily selected had 120 family members that wished to come to the Czech Republic. Because the Czechs are limited to accepting only 40 people (give or take a few), and because the refugees want to be reunited with family members, the Czechs were forced to decrease the number of refugees they accept to 15 (plus, of course, their close family members).

15. (S) Haisman asked the U.S. for help contacting the family members of refugees and transporting them safely to the border of Uzbekistan. Haisman was confident that the Czechs can transport the family members onward to the Czech Republic if they can make it to the border of Uzbekistan.

16. (C) Haisman indicated that all the "necessary parties" have been notified of the Czech decision to take only 15 of the refugees, but he did not know whether an alternative destination has been identified for the 25 remaining refugees. Poloff asked whether the Czechs could offer temporary refugee status to some or all of the 25 until they are able to go to another destination country. Haisman said the Czechs would consider that possibility.

Does the 15 include that guy in the trench coat?

17. (S) Finally, Haisman said he is concerned that foreign intelligence operatives may be following the movement of the Uzbek refugees from Romania to the Czech Republic. He spoke of "signals" that private groups of Russian speakers are asking sensitive questions about the refugees. In light of the perceived security concerns, Haisman repeated his request for U.S. assistance, or at least guidance on how the Czechs can safely contact family members in Uzbekistan, and move them safely to the border.

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